

CONFIDENTIAL

1711

C O U N C I L F O R G E R M A N J E W R Y
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(OF THE REFUGEE ORGANISATIONS) TO THE HIGH
COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES FROM GERMANY held at
WOBURN HOUSE on 15th June, 1936 at 3 p.m.

Present:- Sir Herbert Samuel.(in the Chair)
Lord Duncannon (representing Sir Neill Malcolm).
Mrs. Ormerod (representing Miss Pye) - The Quakers.
Mr. Norman Bentwich - Council for German Jewry.
Dr. Demuth - Notgemeinschaft der Deutschen Wissenschaftler.
Mr. Walter Adams - Academic Assistance Council.
Mr. Herbert May)
Dr. Bernhard Kahn) American Joint Distribution Committee.
Dr. Martin Rosenblueth - Jewish Agency.
Mr. K. Battsek - Jewish Refugees Committee.
Mr. A. Wurfbain - International Christian Appeal.
Mr. M. Stephany. Dr. Treviranus.

The Agenda.

(1) Representation at the Inter-Governmental Conference.

Sir Herbert Samuel, said Mr. Norman Bentwich, had already spoken to Sir Neill Malcolm about the suggestion of having one or two delegates from the Advisory Committee present at the Inter-Governmental Conference in Geneva on July 2nd, so as to give information to the Government Representatives. Sir Neill Malcolm had welcomed the suggestion. It was decided to restrict the delegation to Mr. Norman Bentwich, and someone to represent the International Christian Appeal. They would be in consultation with the representatives of other organisations who would be in Geneva independently, and with Dr. Nahum Goldmann of the Jewish Agency. Sir Neill Malcolm should be advised that this delegation was being sent to give any assistance that might be required.

Mr. Battsek suggested the refugees should be directly represented and speak for themselves. Mr. Bentwich reminded the meeting that the Inter-Governmental Conference was not called to hear evidence, but to have a technical discussion on documents of identity for refugees and similar subjects. The Chairman suggested that the delegates of the Committee should consult with any representatives of the refugees who would be present at Geneva.

(2) Composition of the Committee.

The High Commissioner had suggested the possible addition to the Committee of a representative of the Refugee Organisations of Czechoslovakia. It was pointed out that if the Organisations in that country were specially represented, the other National Organisations might claim a place and the Committee would become unwieldy. Mrs. Ormerod observed that the International Federation

of Trades Unions might suitably represent the Czech Committees.

Mr. Bentwich suggested as an alternative that there might be two bodies, following the lines of the old High Commission:- (1) a larger one consisting of organisations from different countries, which could be convened once or twice in the year, and (2) a smaller Advisory Committee, as now constituted.

It was agreed that it would be desirable to call a conference of all the principal Committees some time before the League Assembly in September, to consider what policy should be pursued with regard to the refugee question at the Assembly. The meeting should be convened at Geneva a few days before the opening of the Assembly.

Lord Duncannon joined the Meeting at this point and expressed regret that Sir Neill Malcolm was unable to be present.

(3) Proposals for the International Convention on the Status of Refugees.

The High Commissioner had communicated to the Committee a copy of his draft proposals that were to be discussed at the Inter-Governmental Conference. The draft had been circulated to the members of the Committee. It was discussed section by section.

Objection was taken to the proposed definition of a "refugee coming from Germany." It was feared that, in its present form, it would be used by Governments as a ground for restricting narrowly the class of refugee to be assisted. Lord Duncannon explained that the definition was designed only for the purpose of the issue of the document of identity, and that would be made clear. The general view was, it would be better to proceed without a definition and it was decided to communicate to the High Commissioner the objections that were felt to the draft.

The provision that the identity certificate to be issued to a refugee "shall be required" for the admission of the refugee to another State was criticised. Lord Duncannon thought that the wording could be modified.

Section 11, dealing with expulsion and "refoulement" was criticised. It appeared that there was an error in translation of the French text, which would be corrected. The observations of the Committee would be conveyed to the High Commissioner.

(4) The Committee then examined a draft statement as to the future activity of the High Commission for German Refugees, which had been prepared by Mr. Bentwich. The draft was generally approved, with a few modifications. It was decided to delete the reference to the possibility of a League loan for the settlement of the refugees, and also the suggestion that the Budget of the High Commission should be contributed partly from the funds of the League and partly from contributions of the Organisations.

With regard to the constitution of a League Organisation, the general feeling was that a separate body independent of the Nansen Organisation would be preferable to a single Organisation for all refugees with a special section dealing with the German refugees. Mrs. Ormerod pointed out that the Quakers had supported the proposal for a single Organisation; and although they did not feel strongly about it, they could not well reverse their position. It was agreed that the paragraph concerning the constitution should be revised.

Mr. May, who was a member of the former High Commission, urged that provision should be inserted that the future High Commission for German Refugees should submit reports to the Council and the Assembly of the League. It was agreed that the addition should be made.

As regards future meetings, the Chairman observed that probably no meeting of the Committee would be required till after the Assembly of the League; but the larger conference of representatives of the Refugee Organisations mentioned above would be convened immediately before the Assembly.

Council for German Jewry: Minutes. 15 June 1936. TS Archives of the Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief, 1933-1960 17.